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# INDIANA QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF HISTORY

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## EDITORIAL.

### HISTORICAL SOCIETIES.

The finished product of historical work has always proved deeply interesting when presented by such masters as Bancroft, Prescott, Parkman or Rhodes. The work of individual research, also, which lies at the bottom of all historical work of value, possesses a strong attraction for any one who embarks in it, no matter whether at some obscure point or in some highly important and widely known question. Cooperative historical work, however, has not yet received as much recognition in this country as it should; not nearly so much as it has for a long time received in Europe. The reasons are not far to seek. We have not yet realized the importance and the magnitude of the task of preserving our history. There are not yet enough great questions among us whose satisfactory solution has become forever impossible owing to the loss of material bearing upon them; not enough documents lost whose importance, increased by time and the destruction of other evidence, stimulates the effort to preserve other documents and collect other evidence which we still possess. Moreover, the subject matter with which the historian deals is so comprehensive and yet so elusive that cooperation is not always possible. Astronomers have planned with comparative ease cooperative schemes of work in which most of the great observatories and scores of astronomers will probably be engaged for generations. Scientists can deal with animate nature even with more or less fixed and arbitrary divisions. But the record of men's thoughts and doings is so complex and the subject so uncertain that no one can hope to call history an exact science. The channels, accordingly, by which it is produced re-

main as yet for the most part for a few individual workers to dig out.

The need of cooperative work, however, is very apparent. There are questions whose solution, unless they are to be left for chance and prejudice to settle, must be answered by historical research. Many phases of our financial policy, numerous political and constitutional developments, race questions, especially those involved in the relation of the races, are probably susceptible of definite answer, if we only had adequate information, information which it is perfectly possible to ascertain, but which can be gotten in full only by the combined efforts of government bureaus and semi-public societies. In every field of historical work there are records lost, there is work undone, both through lack of general interest and through lack of intelligent cooperation. There are some matters covered over and over and some important matters left untouched.

Recently great progress has been made toward better organization of historical work. Perhaps the strongest influence comes from the American Historical Association. This, through its quarterly, *The American Historical Review*, through its annual meetings, through its numerous and effective committees, has not only done much to introduce better methods of teaching history, but has stimulated the collection of materials and has undertaken more or less systematic cooperative work. As its membership is open to practically all who are interested in history, upon payment of a slight fee, it embraces both well-known historians and amateurs. Its president for the year 1908, Professor George B. Adams, of Yale University, also the chairman of the board of editors of *The American Historical Review*, has long been active in promoting the ends of the association. The association has two considerable prizes at its disposal, the Justin Winsor prize and the Herbert Baxter Adams prize, awarded annually through committees for original work in the field of American and European history. Among the more important committees are the Historical Manuscripts Commission, Public Archives Commission (at present at work on the archives of

the Republic of Texas), and committees on bibliography and on publications.

The Carnegie Institute, endowed by Mr. Carnegie to encourage and systematize original work in all fields, has an historical department. Professor J. Franklin Jameson, formerly of the University of Chicago, is at the head of this work. Among the tasks being undertaken under his direction are the collection and publication of matter from European archives bearing upon American history and the preparation of bibliographies of materials in the State library of each State in the Union dealing with the economic development of that State and of the country at large. Some of this work will doubtless prove comparatively barren, a mere heaping of document upon document, of title upon title. But at least it will be done and the path of the future investigator will be made easier.

Interesting developments have taken place in the historical circles of the middle West within the last few months in the direction of the organizations of new agencies. Last year at Cincinnati a two-days' conference was held, in connection with which the Ohio Valley Historical Association was organized. This interstate movement, originating chiefly at Cincinnati, aims to have regular meetings, and by these, together with the influence of its officers and committees, to quicken the public interest in the history of the Ohio Valley. It also proposes to coordinate work done in the different States in matters common to the whole group of States. Several Indiana men attended the first meeting of the society and will probably take part in its subsequent work.

The work of State and local historical societies generally is usually discussed at some session of the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. This session serves, somewhat informally, as a clearing house for these organizations, and has its chairman and secretary who may be considered as officers at large in this line of work. At the last session, in Madison, Wis., the secretary, Professor Evarts B. Greene, of the University of Illinois, reported great progress, especially in the middle West, in appropriations for historical purposes and in new enterprises

undertaken, but showed that appropriations were often not wisely made, that work such as editing was in some cases being badly done, and that there was much waste.

The semi-official report of the last session of this conference, which can be read in *The American Historical Review* for April, 1908, pp. 438-9, is very suggestive. The principal subject was, "The Cooperation of State Historical Societies in the Gathering of Material in Foreign Archives." After considerable discussion a committee of seven was appointed to consider possible schemes of cooperation, consisting of Mr. Dunbar Rowland, director of the Department of Archives and History in Mississippi, chairman; W. C. Ford, E. B. Greene, J. F. Jameson, T. M. Owen, B. F. Shambaugh and R. G. Thwaites. This committee will doubtless have a report which will be of interest to Indiana, in as much as much of our early history is involved in documents which belong also to the history of Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Louisiana and other States.

The cooperation of local historical societies was similarly discussed on the basis of a paper by Mr. John F. Ayer, secretary of the Bay State Historical League, a union of local historical societies in Massachusetts which has apparently been successful in widening the field of work and increasing the membership of the several organizations composing it.

Another organization also came to life at the meeting of the American Historical Association at Madison—the Mississippi Valley Historical Association. The object of this body apparently is to serve as a means of putting into effect plans of cooperation between State historical societies. It is to be made up of men active in these. The executive committee consists of Dr. Thomas M. Owen, president; Professor Clarence W. Alvord, vice president; Clarence S. Paine, secretary-treasurer; Dr. Reuben G. Thwaites and George W. Martin. The Mississippi Valley seems in many ways to afford a more natural and more important grouping of States than the Ohio Valley and though there is doubtless room for the latter for the purpose of holding annual conferences and doing other work, the former is admirably adapted to serve as a basis of cooperation between State societies.

There is danger amid this multiplicity of organizations that the machinery will fairly stifle the workers. There is danger also that magic efficacy may be attributed to societies. It is the individual, and the individual alone, who does the work. He may be helped by associations, but no association ever accomplished anything of itself. It is to be hoped that these recent developments are not simply manifestations of the tendency to organize, but symptoms of the beginning of more active work and more intelligent cooperation.

Meanwhile in Indiana we are making progress. The article by our State Archivist, Dr. Harlow Lindley, in this number, shows that at least one step has been taken in the right direction by the State government. The possibilities of general work are becoming more and more apparent. Many people have been interested in Indiana history. The separate incidents and episodes of that history have been written up unusually well. The early French settlements, the capture of Vincennes by Clark, the political contest for and against slavery, the Indian troubles, and many other chapters are probably as well known as events of similar importance in any State of the Union.

But in many lines of study we have almost everything yet to do. In collections of important original documents and transcripts we are, as has repeatedly been shown, far behind even neighboring States. In the study of some of the most important phases of our history we hardly have the data for beginning work. It is of the utmost importance that broader interest and better cooperation be secured. For instance, the immigration into the State from the time of the American occupation combines perhaps more questions and is of more general interest than any other development. A comprehensive study of it would require the cooperation of State and local historical societies and all other suitable agencies within our borders. With such a combination continued for some time, it would probably be possible to trace all important currents of immigration and point out subsequent tendencies growing out of them. Would it not be possible for the State Historical Society to concentrate the ef-

forts of all historical agencies in the State for a definite period upon such a subject, and while not ignoring other things which individual investigators might in the meantime here and there turn up, devote its publications, its meetings, and its influence chiefly to that one topic? The character of the publications already put out by the State Historical Society challenges comparison with those of any other State. But they have been the result of scattering, individual effort alone, and represent practically the labor of the few men whose names are attached to the various articles. Would not a greater general interest and cooperation be secured by a mass movement upon some one question or set of questions in our history? If a question of present, vital interest, not one of mere antiquarian concern, were chosen, there is no reason why universal cooperation could not be secured. Early internal improvements present a matter of investigation that might well enlist such an effort, especially in view of the present interest in interior waterways and the conservation of natural resources. A practical value of such work would lie in the possibility that future mistakes might be avoided by a clearer understanding of past experience. The study of political parties could nowhere be better prosecuted than in Indiana, which has been for several generations one of their fiercest battlefields. The relation of national politics and local affairs, the influence of national parties upon local government, might very well be made the subject of such a cooperative study as has been suggested.

Our local historical societies apparently need some such stimulus as this. So far as known to this magazine, not more than three or four county historical societies show many signs of activity. Henry, Wayne and Monroe counties especially are simply exceptions to the general lethargy. The trouble seems to be not so much in the inability to do anything or in the lack of means, but in the lack of an interesting and important purpose or of intelligent direction. At times past suggestive meetings at least have been held, and some good publications gotten out by such county organizations as those of Lake and Wabash counties, or such groups as the Northern Indiana Historical Society. A

concerted movement in a common field would probably revive many groups that now resemble extinct volcanoes.

There has been considerable discussion recently of possible co-operation between the State Historical Society and local societies. In our next number we hope to give a short account of the work of these agencies in Wisconsin, which is probably the leading State in the West in this respect. Meanwhile reports from local societies, and contributions of papers produced in them, and discussions of the general subject of these remarks will be welcome.

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### NOTES.

#### HENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The twenty-second annual meeting of this, the most flourishing county historical society in the State of Indiana, was held Thursday, April 30th, 1908, at the Historical Society Building, No. 614 South Fourteenth street, Newcastle. In the printed program a very interesting session was arranged for, including among other numbers presentation of new material for the historical, biographical and portrait collections, and an "illustration exercise of pioneer methods of preparing and spinning flax and wool on the old-time little wheel, and also on the great wheel," by Spiceland township people, who were familiar with the work.

The annual session of the Caroline Scott Harrison Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was held at the home of Mrs. C. S. Sargent, in Indianapolis, May 14th. The secretary, Mrs. W. C. Buell, reported \$400 now available for a memorial of Mrs. Harrison, for whom the chapter is named, in the Continental Hall at Washington. The registrar, Mrs. W. S. R. Tarkington, reported the present membership as two hundred and fifty, of whom twenty-three are life members.

The Anthony Wayne Memorial Association has been formed at Ft. Wayne with officers as follow: Chairman, Captain H. W.